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Citizen's Council Radio Forums
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Guest (s): Strom Thurmond (D-SC)
Title: Integration and How to Oppose

Note: Questions were paraphrased and/or shortened by the transcriber. For the exact question, please consult the audiotapes.

Morphew: Introduction...what do you feel is the best approach to meet integration threats?

Thurmond: Well, I think there are many things that could be done but I think there are two things especially that are necessary. The first is, I think we must have an organized South, and incidentally, I want to commend the splendid work of the Citizens' Councils for what they have done. The next is, I think we've got be careful in electing our officials. We must be sure that the officers we elect are true and loyal and that they believe in the constitution and the principles for which the constitution stands.

Morphew: What will be the determining factor in this struggle?

Thurmond: Well, I think the determining factor probably is going to be the will and the spirit and the determination of the people to hold out. The question comes down, I think, to one of two things, are we going to submit or are we going to resist? I say, resist. I do not think we ought to yield. I do not think we ought to surrender, and I do not favor submitting.

Morphew: Do you think federal force can bring about integration in the South?

Thurmond: I don't think so because, after all, public sentiment controls the actions of people, and I am confident that the public sentiment in the South is against integration and especially forced integration and therefore, I do not think it can be successful. It's my opinion that if the people of the South will hold out and will resist and will be determined that we can win this fight if they will just hold out for two or three years.

Morphew: Do you think are some that are a bit fainthearted in their approach?

Thurmond: Well, I'm afraid that some have been fainthearted. I'm afraid that some in high positions have been fainthearted and I would like to see them become stronger in

their spirit because this is a greater question than just integration. Integration is really only one facet of this picture, of big picture, which is to break down constitutional government in this country.

Morphew: A public official can be encouraged to strengthen his stand, can't he, if his people are convinced that this is what he should do?

Thurmond: That's right. That's the reason I say again, I think it goes back to public opinion, the sentiment of the people. If the sentiment of the people is strong enough then I am sure that the representatives of the people will carry out their wishes, but the people must be strong and determined and if they are determined then their representatives will have their backbone strengthened and some of them need to be strengthened, but at any rate, the will of the people will prevail, if the will of the people is strong enough.

Morphew: Already in this session a number of civil rights bills have been 'dropped into the hopper' ...what will the result be?

Thurmond: Well, it's hard to say, Dick, at this time, just what will be the final result. So far as I am concerned, I am opposed to any so-called civil rights bills. The Bill of Rights in the constitution of the United States, which consists of the first ten amendments, provide the finest civil rights that I know of, and these civil rights programs that are being introduced in the Congress, I think, are political. I don't think that some of those who are sponsoring these bills really are doing it from a true sense of sincerity. I think they are doing it to appease minority blocs. Of course, that doesn't apply to everyone who's introduced a civil rights bill, but I do feel that it's largely a political question and they are using it for political purposes.

Morphew: Do you feel that the federal government has any place in the civil rights field anyway?

Thurmond: No, I don't think so. I think I expressed my sentiments on this during my long address in 1957 when I spoke about 24 hours and 20 minutes. The federal government, really, Dick, as you know, has only the powers that have been delegated to it by the states. It has no others because we had states before we had a federal government, and the states joined together and formed the federal government by signing a constitution. Twelve of the states had representatives at Philadelphia in 1787. The thirteenth state, Rhode Island, was in the hands of the radicals and did not send representatives, but at that time the constitution was adopted and two years later the congress met and then, two years later, the bill of rights were adopted. And the federal government can only act in the fields in which it has delegated to it the power to act. Education is not one of those fields, and I might say today, however, the federal government is in many fields that, under the constitution, it really does not have the power to act. And Dick, there is a trend today, to go further and further, and inject the federal government into many fields in which it doesn't have the power under the constitution to act. I think one of the greatest dangers to this country today is federal encroachment, encroachment on the rights of the states, federal usurpation, usurping the rights of the people and the rights of the states. All we've

got to do is abide by the constitution. The constitution is a wonderful document, it's the basic law of the land. Our forefathers meant for it to be hard to amend it and therefore, those who want to change things do not want to follow that procedure. They want to shorten the course and they attempt to get Congress to pass acts or they try to get the Supreme Court to hand down decisions or get the executive branch of the government to hand down regulations or fiats that are not in accord with the constitution.

Morphew: What do you feel is the purpose behind the assault on the south?

Thurmond: Well, I think it's largely political. I think that it may be inspired some because the South is making tremendous progress industrially and in other ways, but I think it's purely for political purposes to try to satisfy minority blocs, to make appeals to some of the minorities. Now, I want to say this, that some of these people, although they may be true and loyal Americans, when they thought of this course, are really playing in the hands of the communists because this is part of the communist program to try to force integration upon the South and the nation because the communists know that this question will bring about a great division of our people and divide our people and that's what they want. And we should remain united in the whole country. Our people should be united and all of these civil rights bills and measures of this kind should be dropped. They should not be pushed and if so you would see a new spirit of unity throughout this whole nation.

Morphew: What would be your advice to people of the south?

Thurmond: I would advise them to resist. I am not in favor of surrendering in this fight. This is a great constitutional fight and as I said, it means more than just integration. It's my firm opinion that if they stand firm for two or three years that we can win this fight. And I don't think we ought to submit. I do think it's important as I said in the beginning, however, for the people of the South, in every state and every community, to organize and stand firm. I think it's important, as I said before, to elect leaders who have courage and who have convictions and who will stand firm, people who have will and determination. I realize that this is going to cause a great sacrifice on the part of many people, some may even have to go to jail, but a jail is not nearly so bad as losing our freedom. I realize that this is going to cause suffering on the part of a great many people, but if we value our freedom and our liberty we should be willing to suffer.

Morphew: The opponents of our viewpoint say that resistance essentially amounts to insurrection...what is your comment to that charge?

Thurmond: I don't think so. The constitution is clearly written, and of course, everyone can put his own construction on it. I certainly don't accept the construction of these nine men here who are temporarily filling the positions of the Supreme Court. The constitution has been construed down through the years, and all of the great courts of the past have construed the constitution in a different way from what the present occupants of the Supreme Court have construed it. And I think the present occupants of the Supreme Court are more politicians than they are judges. Why, there are many, many lawyers in

almost any county of South Carolina, and that would apply to most of the counties of the South, who know more law than these nine so-called judges now sitting on the Supreme Court of the United States. They either don't know the law or they don't have regard for the constitution, or either they're plainly political and they are trying to join with a great many people in this country today who are making a play to the minorities.